



SEE YOU IN THE USA II





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International Information Programs:

Coordinator	Daniel Sreebny
Executive Editor	Jonathan Margolis
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Editor-in-Chief	Richard W. Huckaby
Managing Editor	Bruce Odessey
Production Manager	Janine Perry
Designer	Chloe D. Ellis

Photo Editor	Maggie Johnson Sliker
Cover Design	Diane Woolverton
Graphics Designer	Vincent Hughes
Reference Specialists	Stephanie Joyce
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Editor, *eJournal USA*
IIP/PUBJ
U.S. Department of State
2200 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20522-0501
USA

E-mail: eJournalUSA@state.gov

About This Issue



Vincent Hughes

In 2005, we published *See You in the USA*, an *eJournal USA* intended, in the words of its editors, to make clear “that the United States wholeheartedly welcomes foreign visitors who desire to study, conduct business, or simply see the sights in its very diverse 50 states.” *See You in the USA* swiftly emerged as our bestseller, and it has remained popular to this day.

Since 2005 a number of laws affecting visitors have changed, including some governing visas and others ensuring homeland security. We saw a need to update this information and an opportunity to introduce readers to additional sights, tastes, and opportunities they may encounter in the United States.

This *eJournal* offers materials of use to students, tourists, and business travelers alike. We hope it will find as large and as enthusiastic an audience as its predecessor.

Near the end of his November 2009 Shanghai town hall meeting, President Obama told the gathering, “I hope that many of you have the opportunity to come and travel and visit the United States. You will be welcome.” We believe that readers of this month’s *eJournal* will agree.

— *The Editors*



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Change in the Air

Jane Levere

Technology to make enhanced security less onerous, a sluggish economy, and the Internet have all contributed to a changed experience for foreigners traveling to the United States. Jane Levere is a journalist writing on transportation and travel issues.

Digital fingerprinting, fluctuations in the dollar exchange rate, and a mass of online information are some of the ways making travel to the United States in 2010 a different experience for international visitors than it was earlier in the 21st century.

These changes are evident even before the visitor leaves his or her country.

In 2004, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) — a department of the federal government established by legislation in late 2002, after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks — established a new series of biometric procedures for international visitors holding non-U.S. passports or visas.

Specifically, when these visitors apply for a visa, the officer interviewing them reviews their application and supporting documents and collects both digital fingerprints and a digital photograph.

Recently, the waiting time for these interviews has been significantly reduced. According to Geoff Freeman, senior vice president of public affairs of U.S. Travel, the trade organization for the U.S. travel industry, many prospective visa applicants now wait fewer than 30 days for an interview, compared to more than 100 days in the past.

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) — which exempts citizens from countries that meet various security and other requirements from obtaining a visa for visits to the United States of 90 days or fewer for business or pleasure — applies to 36 countries. These countries comprise Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Republic of Korea, San Marino, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

A traveler from a country participating in the VWP

must obtain an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA), an online travel authorization, established by DHS. ESTA determines, before the traveler boards a flight, whether the traveler is eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risks.

When an international traveler arrives in the United States, he or she must submit one of two documents to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer: either a white Form I-94, if the traveler has a visa, or a green Form I-94W, if the traveler is a VWP participant. The CPB officer asks the traveler questions about his or her stay, scans the traveler's fingerprints, and takes a digital photograph. In addition, VWP travelers, who are not required to obtain a visa, will soon need to pay a fee. The traveler keeps a portion of the I-94 or I-94W form after the CPB check and returns it to CPB upon departure from the United States.

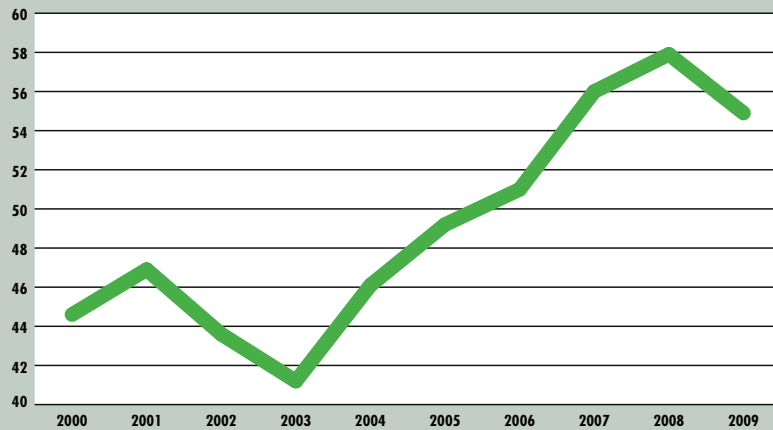
In 2007 Congress authorized the expenditure of \$40 million on a "Model Ports of Entry" program, designed specifically to improve the arrival experience of foreign travelers at the 20 U.S. airports with the highest number of international visitors. The program aims to improve staffing, queue management, signage, and infrastructure at the top 20 U.S. international airports and to hire at least 200 new CPB officers.

Changes in the global economy have also had a significant impact on the travel experience of international visitors to the United States.

There is far more air service, by U.S. and non-U.S. airlines, to more U.S. destinations than ever before, spurred by the proliferation of airlines worldwide, and by their use of aircraft that can serve the new routes economically and efficiently. U.S. carriers such as American Airlines, Continental Airlines, and Delta Airlines have aggressively increased their international service, particularly to Europe and Asia, while European and Asian airlines such as British Airways, Lufthansa, and Singapore Airlines have added new U.S. routes, and increased frequencies on routes already served. In addition, "open skies" agreements, which lift restrictions on flights, have been signed by the United States with the European

Foreign Travel in the USA, 2000–2009

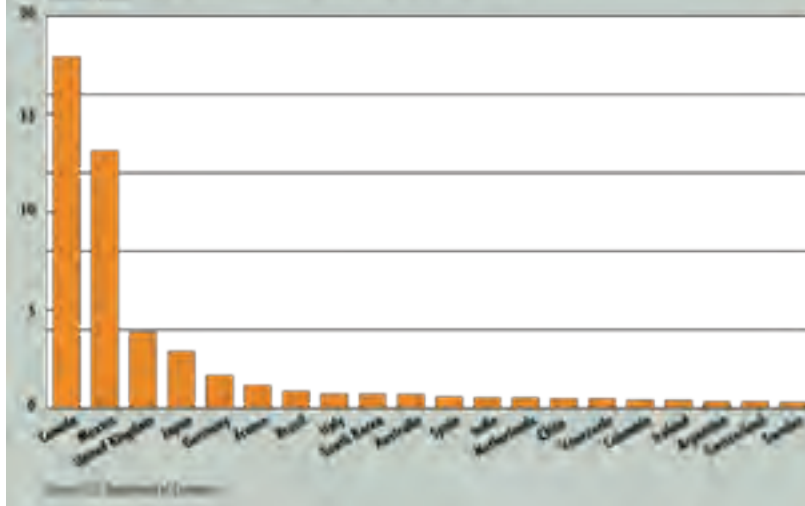
Millions of Visitors



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

Top Sources of International Tourists to U.S., 2009

Millions of Visitors



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

Vincent Hughes

that previously were quite expensive to visit, such as New York and San Francisco, are now more affordable.

The weak U.S. economy has also created — for the time being at least — a glut of empty hotel rooms, which has led to deep discounts on many room rates, another plus for international visitors.

Globalization has made the United States a more attractive venue for international trade shows. Rossi Ralengkotter, president and chief executive of the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority, says the number of international attendees is up at the National Association of Broadcasters convention and at the Consumer Electronics Show, both events held in Las Vegas.

The Internet, added Fred Dixon, senior vice president of tourism and convention development at NYC & Company, also has made the United States a more accessible destination for international visitors. “There’s more information available than ever before, more booking channels direct to consumers, who can book from their home, book from their phone,” he said.

One top online tool to research travel in the United States is the Web site www.discoveramerica.org. Developed in 2009 by U.S. Travel and the U.S.

Department of Commerce, the site offers information from American Express, Fodor’s, Travelocity, Google, Weather.com, state tourism offices, and destinations’ convention and visitor bureaus, among many organizations. This information is provided in English, Spanish, German, Japanese, and French. ■

Union and Japan, increasing air service from both to the United States.

The recent downturn in the global economy has markedly weakened the dollar, though its value has crept up slightly since late 2009. An exchange rate of 1.12 euro to \$1 was in effect when the euro became legal tender January 1, 2001; the rate fell to a low of 0.63 euro to \$1 in 2008.

The United States is a far less expensive place to travel for visitors from any country whose currency has appreciated against the dollar. Popular U.S. destinations

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

I Want to Apply for a Tourist Visa

WHO MAY APPLY FOR A TOURIST VISA?

You may apply for a tourist (B-2) visa if your travel is (1) recreational (including tourism, visits with friends or family, unpaid participation in cultural or sports events, or other pleasure reasons) or (2) for medical treatment in the United States.

You must apply for a visa unless your country participates in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and your visit will take fewer than 90 days. In that case, you must have a passport that can be scanned by an electronic reader. A new regulation requires that VWP travelers apply for electronic travel authorization. Find more information at http://travel.state.gov/visa/templ/without/without_1990.html#epassport.

HOW LONG BEFORE MY TRIP SHOULD I APPLY?

Apply at least two months before you plan to travel. This allows for the time it takes to obtain a visa interview, time for visa processing, and time for any additional administrative processing (rarely needed). Wait times vary by embassy and time of the year — for example, many visa applicants want to travel during the U.S. summer (June through August), so the delay then may be longer. Country-specific guidance is available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/templ/wait/wait_4638.html.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN STEPS IN APPLYING FOR A B-2 VISA?

The first step is to make an appointment for a visa interview at the U.S. embassy or a U.S. consulate in your country. You must then pay a visa-processing fee and fill out the visa application form(s) required in your country: typically the DS-156 and, in some countries, the electronic form DS-160. Forms are available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html. (Note: In most countries, you must fill out the application forms and pay the application fee before seeking an interview. Find visa information specific to your country at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.)

For the interview, you must bring several

documents: (1) a passport valid beyond your dates of travel; (2) the appointment confirmation sheet; (3) the completed visa application form(s); (4) a receipt for the visa application fee; and (5) a 5X5 cm. photo.

You must also bring evidence showing why you are taking the trip; that you intend to leave the United States after your visit; and that you have sufficient funds to meet your needs during the trip. Check with the U.S. embassy in your country to see whether other documentation is necessary.

If you are traveling to the United States for medical treatment, you should also present (1) a medical diagnosis from a local physician explaining why you must be treated in the United States; (2) a letter from a physician or facility in the United States showing willingness to treat your condition and describing in detail the nature, expected duration, and cost of the treatment; and (3) a statement showing who will pay for your transportation, medical, and living expenses. This statement must include proof of the ability to pay these expenses.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO OBTAIN A VISA?

You must pay a nonrefundable visa processing fee of \$131 (as of May 2010). Depending on a reciprocal arrangement between your country and the United States, you might also have to pay a visa issuing fee. Check to see whether your country has a reciprocity fee at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/fees/fees_1341.html.

More information on visiting the United States for tourism or medical treatment is available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/templ/types/types_1262.html.



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.

The Top 10 U.S. Destinations

Tanner Latham

● Ten Top Destinations Visited By Overseas Visitors

◆ And 10 Other Great Destinations



Vincent Hughes

Overseas tourists make a few cities their top U.S. destinations year after year for good reasons. Tanner Latham is the former travel editor of Southern Living magazine.

Every year most of the millions of overseas visitors (that is, excluding those from Canada and Mexico) coming to the United States spend most of their time in a few places, the top 10 listed here in order of popularity. Some of those places are for plunging into the hustle and bustle, and some are for escaping it.

NEW YORK CITY

New York has Wall Street, the theater district, the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, world-class museums, and street vendors offering foods of the world's

nations. It commands the world's attention. Every chef who opens a restaurant here, every designer who presents a line of clothing, and every artist who hangs work in a gallery feels the buzz of excitement that threads each square block of the Big Apple. Visitors have the pleasure of absorbing that energy, whether they are bombarded by the grandiose flashiness of Times Square or given the soft sell by artists presenting their crafts in Union Square Park. www.nycgo.com

LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles is best defined by two of its most famous neighborhoods. Hollywood offers glitz, glamour, and flashes of immense fame. This is where one finds the world's most famous movie stars. Visitors enjoy brief



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© John Brown/Photolibrary/Getty Images



© AP Images/Phelan M. Ebenhack



© Josh Anon/Jaynes Gallery/DanitaDelmont.com

Clockwise from top left: The Statue of Liberty and Lower Manhattan in New York, Universal Studio in Los Angeles, Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom near Orlando, the Golden Gate Bridge at San Francisco, and a lifeguard station in Miami Beach.

access to celebrity when walking down Rodeo Drive and the Sunset Strip, or even posing for pictures outside the historic Grauman's Chinese Theater. Offsetting that scene is the laid-back lifestyle found in the neighborhood of Venice Beach. Here, Oceanfront Walk — a magnet for characters from every walk of life — is one of the best places for people-watching one will ever find.

www.discoverlosangeles.com

SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco is a city defined by the breezes blowing in off the Pacific Ocean. The weather dictates every decision locals and visitors make. Golden Gate Park, with its walking trails, lounging beaches, and views of the iconic Golden Gate Bridge, attracts the most attention on a day when the sun is shining, even if there's a hint of cool in the air. On foggy days, one might venture inland to catch a ride on the ever-dinging cable cars or schedule architectural tours, especially those including "The Painted Ladies," the oft-photographed and -filmed Victorian and Edwardian houses lining the city's steep hills.

www.onlyinsanfrancisco.com

MIAMI AND MIAMI BEACH

Like an up-tempo dance song, Miami and Miami Beach pulse with a constant beat, no matter the hour of the day. South Beach in the sunshine attracts some of the most beautiful people and even features a string of Art Deco-designed lifeguard stations. Ocean Drive after dark — lit with bright neon reds, greens, blues, and pinks — transforms into a sleek, chic scene found nowhere else on the planet. The Hispanic culture is ever-present, reflected in the cuisine and neighborhoods such as Little Havana, where men speak Spanish, lightheartedly ribbing each other while smoking cigars and playing dominoes on Calle Ocho (8th Street).

www.miamiandbeaches.com

ORLANDO

The Greater Orlando area is the land of ultimate escape. It is where imaginations run wild. Even the most creative visitors could not conjure the whole worlds thriving here in the Universal theme parks and at Disney World, or any other attraction bearing the Disney label. But Orlando is not merely a destination of dreams, fantasy, and costumed characters. Downtown visitors find

an interesting blend of architecture, from Victorian-styled houses to high-rises. That area also features boutique shopping, diverse restaurants, and a burgeoning nightlife. For those seeking a great natural space, Lake Eola Park offers a pedestrian-friendly walking loop.

www.orlandoinfo.com

LAS VEGAS

All of Las Vegas is a party. Imagine a giant adult theme park full of the brightest lights and the most decadent, over-the-top buildings. One needs only walk down the Las Vegas Strip to see that vision realized. Visitors here find everything from towering fountains to laser light displays to high-stakes casino games to variety shows headlined by perfectly choreographed performers. Sleeping is the last of any visitor's priorities. Those tourists looking for a slightly less-flashy Vegas experience venture to Fremont Street downtown where many of the casinos feature a more old-fashioned vibe.

www.visitlasvegas.com

HONOLULU

While the city of Honolulu bustles with business, museums, and the Foster Botanical Gardens (a terrific spot for a picnic), the city is best known as the jumping-off point for Hawaii's island of Oahu. Most visitors congregate at Waikiki because of its glorious swimming beaches, shops, restaurants, and abundance of outdoor activities — from surfing lessons to catamaran sailing. Speaking of surfing, most locals and visitors ride their boards in the waters around Haleiwa, a beach town on the North Shore. Those interested in U.S. naval history visit the USS *Arizona* Memorial honoring those killed during the December 1941 attacks on Pearl Harbor and the USS *Missouri*, a battleship decommissioned in 1992.

www.gohawaii.com

WASHINGTON

Washington, D.C., encompasses the spirit of the United States. Visitors find here a convergence of history, American pride, and the buzzing, never-stopping machine of American politics. The city hosts some of the country's greatest museums (from the National Air and Space Museum to the National Gallery of Art). Though urban, the city has always preserved its green, natural spaces. One finds surprising solitude on the trails winding



A full moon over Washington illuminates the Lincoln Memorial (foreground), the Washington Monument (center), and the U.S. Capitol (background).

around Roosevelt Island, which sits peacefully in the middle of the Potomac River. And, of course, one of the greatest attractions is the National Mall, America's front yard. Spread a blanket on the grass and relax surrounded by monuments honoring some of the country's most important leaders.

www.washington.org

CHICAGO

Known for its professional sports teams, world-class restaurants, and fascinating architecture, Chicago stands as the most prominent city in the Midwestern United States. Of all of Chicago's monikers, "A City of Neighborhoods"

seems most apt. With more than 70 unique neighborhoods — from Anderson on the North Side to Hyde Park on the South Side — each embodies an identity unto its own. This city, hugging the shores of Lake Michigan, also features wonderful shopping opportunities for visitors, especially on the "Magnificent Mile" strip of boutiques and designer stores running along Michigan Avenue.

www.explorechicago.org

BOSTON

Boston truly is the jewel of New England. One of the best ways for visitors to encounter the city is via its dynamic chain of parks, such as Boston Common, featuring the family-friendly Frog Pond. The nearby Public Garden hosts its own pond with swan boat tours, which have been in operation since the 1870s. The city honors its key role in American history, but it never focuses solely on the past. For example, Faneuil Hall, where great orators stumped their protests before the American Revolution, now anchors a pedestrian-friendly market full of shops and restaurants. Boston Harbor, the site of the Boston Tea Party, now features the popular HarborWalk, a trail that winds around the waterfront.

www.bostonusa.com. ■

See also *Snapshot USA* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0606.html>], *Outline of American Geography* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/books/outline-of-american-geography.html>], *USA Map with Facts in Brief* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/books/usamap.html>], and *National Parks, National Legacy* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0708.html>].

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Courtesy of Tim Brown



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© George Rose/Getty Images



© AP Images/Lucy Pemoni

Clockwise from top left: Japanese cherry trees at the Tidal Basin in Washington, D.C., the 1797 USS *Constitution* in Boston Harbor, “Cloud Gate” sculpture in Chicago, Waikiki Beach in Honolulu, and the Venetian Resort Hotel Casino in Las Vegas.

10 Other Worthy Destinations

Tanner Latham

Many foreign visitors miss out on U.S. cities loaded with attractions. In addition to the United States' most-visited cities (see "The Top 10 U.S. Destinations," page 7) here are 10 other favorites. Tanner Latham is the former travel editor of Southern Living magazine.

The United States offers a lot more attractions for overseas visitors than the 10 cities they mostly visit. Good food, art, and music, as well as riveting history, can be found in all regions. Here are just a few destinations worth a visit.

PHILADELPHIA

The vibrant present of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is anchored in its rich past. Much of America's early story is told here through tours of such historic sites as Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were debated and the Liberty Bell was rung, according to tradition, to summon citizens of Philadelphia to a reading of the newly adopted Declaration of Independence. But even within the city's historic district, visitors find modern cultural attractions and art galleries filled with works by local artists. Philadelphia's architecture blends 18th- and 19th-century styles with contemporary structures. One of the city's great assets is its walkability: Just about all of the major tourist attractions stand concentrated in an area of about 2.5 square kilometers, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the concert halls and museums along part of Broad Street called Avenue of the Arts.

www.philadelphiausa.travel

ATLANTA

Atlanta offers an urban experience with lots of hospitable southern touches. The pace is steady, but not so fast that one could not enjoy a cold glass of sweet iced tea on a hot afternoon. The city is the crossroads of the South, and some might even argue it's the crossroads of the United States. It owns, after all, the busiest airport in passenger traffic in the entire world. That translates into international influences on the cuisine and culture that a visitor might be surprised to find in the heart of

the state of Georgia. Notable destinations include the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in the Sweet Auburn district; the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum; and the Margaret Mitchell House and Museum, residence of the famed novelist who penned *Gone With the Wind*.

www.atlanta.net

SEATTLE

When most people think Seattle, they think clean and green. The city takes great pride in constantly being ranked as one of the most environmentally friendly cities in the United States. And with high annual precipitation levels, its parks and natural spaces sport a fresh look. Visitors gravitate to Pike's Place Market, one of the oldest continuously operated farmers markets in the country. Street musicians, antique and gift shops, cafes, and the fresh fish (famously tossed by the vendors) all help create the market's appealing ambience. Another popular destination is the Space Needle, part of Seattle Center, a 30-hectare urban park developed for the 1962 World's Fair. Pioneer Square, 20 square blocks of Victorian Romanesque architecture, offers a plethora of art galleries and museums.

www.visitseattle.org

ASHEVILLE

Backdropped by the Blue Ridge Mountains and possessing an easy-going lifestyle, Asheville, North Carolina, stands as one of the greatest mountain towns east of the Mississippi River. Here, visitors find a healthy dining scene driven by available produce and meats from local farms. The cuisine seems to be perfectly complemented by a strong craft beer industry, whose brewers compete to offer the best ales, pilsners, and porters. Boutique shops fill the hilly but walkable downtown streets. Nestled amidst modest neighborhoods lies America's largest privately owned home, the Biltmore Estate, a 19th-century 250-room French Renaissance-styled chateau open for tours. In July every year the city hosts Bele Chere ("beautiful living" in an ancient Scottish dialect), the largest music street festival in the South.

www.exploreasheville.com



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© AP Images/Jessica Griffin



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© Walter Bibikow/Corbis



© Will van Overbeek/National Geographic Stock

Clockwise from top left: A kite flyer near the Space Needle in Seattle, the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta, the Cornell Hurd Band at Jovita's Restaurant in Austin, and the Biltmore House near Asheville.

AUSTIN

Austin, Texas, is a city of surprising diversity. At any given shop, restaurant, or music club queue, you'll find authentic, boot-wearing cowboys mingling with tattooed rockers. Traditional politicians (Austin is the capital of Texas) dine in the same Tex-Mex establishments as avant-garde painters. The University of Texas-Austin keeps the city lively and energetic. And down on South Congress Avenue, amid boutique hotels and folk art shops, a visitor will find one of the best live music scenes in the United States. This beautiful city also features incredible natural spaces best enjoyed via the water sports on the Town Lake water reservoir and the surrounding trails. Perhaps the best way to appreciate Austin is by watching the sunset from a restaurant patio on Lake Austin.

www.austintexas.org

CHARLESTON

When visitors imagine the American South, their visions resemble Charleston. This historic city on the South Carolina coast and its residents exemplify Southern hospitality. To experience that welcoming spirit, one need only to walk the cobblestone streets in the historic district and encounter the longtime locals. King Street is the artery of the city, and wonderful antique shops, boutiques, historic homes with vibrant gardens, and restaurants orbit it on the surrounding blocks. The food scene here is strong thanks to inventive chefs supported by a nearby culinary school.

www.charlestoncvb.com

NASHVILLE

The American country music industry is not the only draw to this city, but Nashville, Tennessee, known affectionately as "Music City," attracts some of the world's best musicians. Visitors can hear them perform in famous large venues such as the Grand Ole Opry House at the Opryland USA theme park and Ryman Auditorium. But they'll also find them atop stools at any number of clubs along Music Row, an area just southwest of Downtown. The Country Music Hall of Fame offers a comprehensive history of the genre. Some of the city's other great museums include the Cheekwood and Belle Meade mansions, and President Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage.

www.visitmusiccity.com

NEW ORLEANS

The vibe of New Orleans, Louisiana, stays as smooth as the live jazz played nightly down on Frenchmen Street. Visitors here can't help but find themselves in the French Quarter, the cultural heart of New Orleans. The district's focal point is Jackson Square, a beautiful park made more colorful by the artists and street musicians. Visitors discover that the New Orleans cuisine — a blend of several influences, including French, Cajun, and Creole — is like no other in the world. One notable fact: Louisiana provides a sales tax refund for international shoppers on purchases made at nearly 900 tax-free stores across the state.

www.neworleanscvb.com

SANTA FE

The stunning southwestern light and landscapes have long attracted artists and visitors to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Life here revolves around the Plaza, the heart of the city that feels more like an intimate village. Museums, shops, restaurants, and boutique inns all lie within steps of here. The Palace of the Governors daily hosts American Indian artisans who sell their artwork, from jewelry to paintings. Santa Fe is the second largest art market in the United States, and those interested in fully experiencing that scene need only stroll Canyon Road, home to about 100 galleries.

www.santafe.org

St. LOUIS

For an authentic introduction to St. Louis, Missouri, begin in Forest Park. Developed for the 1904 World's Fair, the park now draws locals and visitors alike to its numerous attractions, including the St. Louis Art Museum, the St. Louis Zoo, and the Missouri History Museum. All these attractions and many more in St. Louis are free. From there, visitors can get an expanding sense of the city by exploring the surrounding neighborhoods such as the Italian markets and restaurants of Little Italy and the restaurants and bars comprising The Loop. Of course, a ride to the top of the Gateway Arch along the Mississippi River is a must for any visitor.

www.explorestlouis.com ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.



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Clockwise from top: East Bay Street historic district in Charleston, a storefront in Santa Fe, Bourbon Street in New Orleans' French Quarter, Garth Brooks and Little Jimmy Dickens at the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville, and the Gateway Arch along the Mississippi River in St. Louis.



© AP Images/John Russell

Avoid Visa Scams

HOW CAN I BE SURE I'M GETTING CORRECT INFORMATION ABOUT MY VISA?

The U.S. Department of State's visa services office advises visa seekers to use only U.S. government sites. Most U.S. embassy and consulate Web sites have the ".gov" suffix. Pages on these sites are updated frequently.

The best way to ensure that you receive legitimate and up-to-date information is to use U.S. government Web sites. Department of State Web sites <http://www.state.gov/> and <http://travel.state.gov/> link directly to all U.S. embassies and consulates. Forms on these sites are available free of charge. Additional or related forms are available from Department of Homeland Security sites including www.uscis.gov, www.cbp.gov, and www.ice.gov.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER SITES THAT PROVIDE VISA INFORMATION?

Many non-governmental Web sites (containing the suffix ".com," ".net," and ".org") provide legitimate information on immigration or services. However, some sites may not provide up-to-date information. Additionally, some fraudulent sites — including sites that display U.S. flags or buildings — may seem to offer U.S. visas, work permits, green cards, electronic travel authorization through the Electronic System

for Travel Authorization (ESTA), or other services. These impostor sites may request money or personal information. Never provide personal information or send money without making sure you are using an official U.S. government site.

There are also fraudulent sites related to the Diversity (DV) Lottery Program that may request money to complete lottery forms (see the Federal Trade Commission warning <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/alerts/alt003.shtm>). The only official way to apply for the DV lottery is directly through the official U.S. Department of State Web site during the specified and limited-time registration period.

HOW DO I REPORT A FRAUDULENT SITE?

If you want to file a complaint about a visa-related scam, go to the multi-nation consumer protection Web site hosted by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission at <http://www.econsumer.gov/english/>. See also U.S. Department of State Fraud Warning [http://travel.state.gov/visa/immigrants/types/types_1749.html].



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fc4079a>.

A Tourist Voice (China)

Wang Zheng



Times Square, part of the New York City nightscape.

Wang Zheng is a teacher and an influential blogger in China. This piece was translated from Chinese.

I was nervous as I set foot in America as a traveler, but soon my excitement vanished like what the man in the movie *The Terminal* experiences in JFK International Airport. This is such a strange yet intimate world that I grew thrilled and took a deep breath of the summer air, much less humid than the air I had left in China.

My 26-day itinerary was filled with activities ranging from a movie tour to a big enterprises tour and even a cuisine tour.

My perception of America, gained over 30 years by reading *The Window of the World* magazine, now began to crystallize. This was a trip to witness America — enjoying the Manhattan nightscape from the 86th floor of the Empire State Building, partying with new acquaintances at MGM Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, paying homage to the statue of basketball player Michael Jordan at the United Center in Chicago, and matching the palm prints of movie stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles.

Needless to say, I was elated when resting on MIT's [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] green campus lawn in Cambridge, when I marveled at the magnificence of the Washington Monument in Washington, when I tasted delicious lobsters dipped in sauce at Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco, and when I was exposed to the technology of Microsoft Corporation and Boeing's passenger airliners in Seattle.

I became overjoyed so easily, and, lighthearted, I spent all my cash down to the last dollar in my pocket. Beautiful memories remain in my mind, and perhaps many regrets. I didn't go on a shopping

spree to the biggest outlet mall in America, or drive a "Big Wasp" (the Chevrolet Camaro) cruising down the East Coast along U.S. Highway 1, or go to the Kennedy Library in Boston to study the second lost mysterious symbol. I missed watching President Obama land on the White House lawn in Marine One just before I left Washington.

Fortunately, America is a place you can revisit time and again. It's more of a passion than any sentiment that can be expressed in writing over and over. ■

See also U.S. Department of State Visitor Visas [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1265.html].

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

What If I Need Medical Care?

Each year millions of visitors travel safely and enjoyably throughout the United States. Should you become ill during your visit, your hosts, hotel, employer, or consulate can direct you to the nearest physician or health care center. If you have a life-threatening emergency, call the emergency number, 911, for assistance.

Be aware that health care, dental care, and emergency care are relatively expensive in the United States, with physician visits averaging \$155 and emergency room visits averaging \$1,000 nationally, according to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

The United States does not require proof of health insurance for visitors. However, the State Department recommends that visitors have a health insurance policy or obtain a temporary traveler's insurance policy before visiting the United States to

offset the potential costs of an illness or accident. You may also wish to register with your country's embassy on arriving in the United States. Your embassy's Web site can tell you what assistance your consulate can, and cannot, provide. If you use medications or medical equipment for a long-term condition, be sure to bring sufficient supplies or arrange ahead of time for re-supply in the United States.

If you are traveling on a temporary or exchange student visa, you may be able to arrange for health insurance through your employer or institution. Travelers visiting the United States specifically for medical treatment should obtain a B-2 tourist visa. For information on how to apply for this visa, see the article "I Want to Apply for a Tourist Visa" on page 6 or visit the State Department Web page at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1262.html.



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.



Courtesy of Ballet Folklórico de México

SHARING CULTURES —The United States has a lot of visitors from Mexico, but these are special. Like a lot of non-U.S. dancers, musicians, and other entertainers, members of Ballet Folklórico de México enter the United States for regular performance tours.

10 Great American Sandwiches

Robb Walsh



Courtesy of the Atlantic City Convention & Visitors Bureau

Sandwich makers pile on the Italian meats and cheeses at the White House sub shop in Atlantic City, New Jersey.



Courtesy of Emperor Anton/Flickr

Visitors to the United States can enjoy many regional cuisines. Perhaps no dish can boast of as many unique and delicious local variations as the humble — or not so humble — sandwich. Robb Walsh is an author and food writer; he has twice won a James Beard Journalism Award.

The casual meal we call a sandwich takes its name from Englishman John Montagu (1718-1792), the Fourth Earl of Sandwich. According to legend, the earl had his servant bring him meals consisting of meat served between two slices of bread so that the nobleman could eat at the gaming table.

During the Industrial Revolution, the sandwich served as a practical lunch that could be prepared at home and carried to work. In the early 1900s, the sandwich skyrocketed in popularity with the introduction of sliced bread.

Most of America's beloved regional sandwich variations first appeared in the early part of the 20th century. Here are 10 favorites:

EAST COAST SUB

A submarine sandwich is made on a long roll that is sliced lengthwise and generously stuffed. The earliest sub sandwiches were filled with layers of Italian sliced meats (such as salami, mortadella, and seasoned hams) and cheeses, and then topped with lettuce, tomato, and peppers. The bread was lightly coated with an olive oil dressing. Later variations include hot oven-baked subs filled with meatballs in tomato sauce or Italian sausage and peppers.

Legend has it the name came from East Coast shipyard workers. Similar sandwiches are called grinders in New England, heroes in New York, and hoagies in Philadelphia. The sandwiches originated in Italian-American neighborhoods along the Eastern Seaboard but are now available all across the United States. Other local nicknames include rockets, torpedoes, zeppelins, and poor boys.

NEW ORLEANS POOR BOY



The world's longest oyster po'boy in preparation for a street festival in New Orleans.

Frank Stansbury/oysterjubilée.com

The poor boy was named during a streetcar strike in New Orleans in 1929. Sandwiches made on baguettes with leftovers such as roast beef trimmings and gravy were given away free to the striking workers, who were sympathetically called “those poor boys.”

Soon restaurants and stores all over New Orleans began calling their sandwiches “poor

boys” (often pronounced po’boys). Seafood poor boys are the most distinctive variety. Shrimp and oysters were abundant and cheap in New Orleans at the time, and the sandwiches were often filled with fried shrimp or fried oysters. You order a New Orleans poor boy “dressed” if you want lettuce, tomato, and mayonnaise or “undressed” if you want it plain.

GULF COAST MUFFULETTA

In the 1890s, Sicilian bakers in Gulf of Mexico port cities sold their distinctive breads from pushcarts. The round chewy Sicilian loaves called muffulettas were sold whole or sliced in half lengthwise and stuffed with ham and olives.

During the early 1900s Progressive Era, new sanitary regulations outlawed street food vendors all across the United States. Around 1905, Italian grocery stores in the French Quarter neighborhood of New Orleans began to buy the round muffuletta loaves from local Sicilian bakeries and stuff them with salami, mortadella, provolone cheese, and olive salad. The grocers sold ready-to-eat sandwiches to go and provided tables where customers could eat in the store.

Today, muffulettas are mainly sold in restaurants and cafes across the Gulf States. But the French Quarter grocery store muffuletta remains the definitive version.

FLORIDA CUBAN SANDWICH

The Cuban sandwich comprises Cuban bread stuffed with ham, roasted pork, Swiss cheese, pickles, mustard, and sometimes salami. A modern Cuban sandwich is always toasted in a sandwich press until the cheese melts. This gives the sandwich its distinctive flat shape and wonderfully dense texture.

But the original Cuban sandwich wasn’t toasted. The sandwich first became popular around 1900 in Ybor City, Florida, (near Tampa) and in Cuba where it was called a *mixto*. It was the favorite lunch of cigar factory workers and sugar mill employees.

After the 1960s, when Miami was flooded with Cubans fleeing Fidel Castro’s rule, the pressed Cuban sandwich became ubiquitous in cafeterias and coffee shops there. It remains Miami’s favorite sandwich.

PHILLY CHEESESTEAK

Invented at a Philadelphia hot dog stand in the 1930s, this hearty hot sandwich is made with thinly sliced steak that’s cooked on a hot griddle with onions and then served on a split sub roll topped with cheese. Variations include steak with mushrooms, steak with green peppers, and steak with extra onions. Provolone cheese is placed inside the bread roll before the hot steak is added so it melts around the meat. Alternatively, the completed sandwich can be topped with the bright orange processed American cheese spread called Cheez Whiz.



© AP Images/Matt Rourke

Lunchtime patrons line up for Philadelphia cheesesteaks.



Waitress Lesley Spencer displays a lobster roll with onion rings at a restaurant in Five Islands, Maine.

© AP Images/Pat Wellerbach

NEW ENGLAND LOBSTER ROLL

Lobster rolls were made famous in Maine, but they are common in all of the lobster-producing states of New England and in the neighboring Maritime Provinces of Canada. A lobster roll is made with chopped lobster meat mixed with scallions or celery and mayonnaise seasoned with salt and pepper and served on a toasted hot dog roll. The best lobster rolls contain the meat of an entire lobster. Lobster rolls are so popular in New England, even fast-food restaurants serve them.

CHICAGO ITALIAN BEEF

The Italian beef sandwich is one of several regional variations on the roast beef sandwich. This one was made famous by Chicago hot dog stands. It's made with thinly shaved slices of garlicky wet-roasted beef mounded on a long roll that has been dipped into the meat juice. The sandwich can be ordered "sweet" (topped with sautéed peppers) or "hot" (topped with spicy pickle mix called *giardiniera*). The bread can be requested "dipped" (lightly dunked in the meat juice), "juicy" (double-dipped), or "soaked" (dripping wet).

LOS ANGELES FRENCH DIP

Like the Chicago Italian beef, the L.A. French Dip is made with thinly sliced roast beef served on a baguette. But the Hollywood version of the sandwich is usually made with freshly sliced medium to medium-rare roast beef rather than the pre-shaved beef that's typically used in Chicago. The bread is spread with Dijon mustard and lightly dipped in meat juice. The L.A. French dip is often served with a bowl of roast beef *au jus* on the side so that the diner can dunk the sandwich in the meat juice.

BUFFALO BEEF ON A WECK

Around the city of Buffalo in western New York State, the regional roast beef sandwich is served on a kummelweck roll.

German-born bakers popularized this round roll topped with kosher salt and caraway seeds. Kummel is German for caraway, and weck is the word for roll in the southern German dialect. Buffalo bar owners made sandwiches on the salty German rolls thinking it would make their patrons thirsty. The rare roast beef is thinly sliced, and the kummelweck roll is dipped in *au jus*. Horseradish, dill pickles, and french fries are the standard accompaniments.

TEXAS BBQ BRISKET SANDWICH

Slow-smoked beef brisket is the favorite meat at Texas barbecue establishments, and the most popular way to eat it is on a sandwich. There are two versions. A sliced brisket sandwich is made on a hamburger roll that has been spread with barbecue sauce. Thin slices of brisket are piled up on the roll. The meat is topped with onion slices and dill pickle chips. A chopped brisket sandwich is made with a mixture of minced brisket and barbecue sauce and also topped with onion and pickle. The chopped brisket variation resembles a sandwich made with minced meat in a tangy tomato sauce called a "Sloppy Joe" in other parts of the country. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

I Want to Apply for a Student Visa

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO BEFORE I APPLY?

After a college or university accepts you, and before you apply for a visa, your new school needs to send you the form (I-20 or DS-2019) required for the either the student or exchange visitor visa you need and a document enrolling you in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is a Web-based information system that keeps track of foreign students. You must pay a SEVIS enrollment fee; the fee for most students is \$200 (as of May 2010). For more information on SEVIS, please see: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>.

HOW LONG BEFORE MY CLASSES START SHOULD I APPLY?

You should apply early, up to 120 days before classes start. Visa processing times vary from country to country, but student visa and exchange visitor visa applicants are given priority. Some visa applications require additional processing, which could take up to 60 days.

Information about waiting times for scheduling an interview and processing your application is available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

WHAT KIND OF VISA SHOULD I APPLY FOR?

You should apply for an F-1 visa if you want to study at an accredited U.S. college or university or to study English at a university or language institute. You should apply for a J-1 visa if you are participating in an educational or cultural exchange program. You should apply for an M-1 visa if you are enrolled in nonacademic or vocational program. For more information on these types of visas, please see: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1270.html.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO OBTAIN A VISA?

You must pay the SEVIS fee: \$200 for F-1 and M-1 visas and \$180 for J-1 visas. You must also pay a nonrefundable visa-processing fee of \$131 (as of May 2010). Also, depending on a reciprocal arrangement

between your country and the United States, you might have to pay a visa issuing fee. Check to see whether your country has a reciprocity fee at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/fees/fees_1341.html.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN STEPS IN APPLYING FOR A VISA?

First, you need to make an appointment for a visa interview by consulting the Web site of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. See <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

For the interview you must assemble some documents. These include: (1) a passport valid beyond your dates of travel; (2) the printed confirmation page of a properly completed visa application (DS-160, completed online); (3) the visa-qualifying document supplied by your academic institution (I-20 or DS-2019); (4) the payment receipt for the SEVIS fee; and (5) a 5X5 cm. photo, if not provided with the DS-160 application. (Note: You must fill out the application forms and pay the application fee before seeking an interview. Find the Web site visa information specific to your country here: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>).

At the interview you must demonstrate that you are a serious student who is well informed about the school, has a well-developed plan of study, and knows about the subject you plan to study. You also need to demonstrate that you plan to return home. This means showing that you have a non-U.S. residence and no immediate intention of abandoning it, intend to depart from the United States upon completing your studies, and have enough money for your first year of study.

See also *Campus Connections* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>] and *College and University Education in the United States* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/1105.html>].



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.

A Student Voice (India)

Debarchana Basu



Courtesy of Purdue Marketing and Media

The Loeb Fountain with University Hall in the background at Purdue University.

Debarchana Basu is a student of linguistics from India at Purdue University in Indiana.

The euphoric adrenaline rush after receiving the acceptance letter from Purdue University was quickly replaced by agonized trepidations of the dreaded last step: an early-morning appointment at the U.S. consulate in Calcutta, India. I had to take that step before boarding my first international flight to fulfill the dreams of higher education in one of the most prestigious universities in the United States.

After a month of frenzied packing and emotional adios to family and friends, I landed in Chicago O'Hare International Airport on a gorgeous August afternoon after travelling 22 hours over two continents and an ocean: wide eyed, awestruck, tired, and excited.

After seven years, now I am on the verge of moving on, stepping back into the world with impressive degrees and the best of academic education. Beyond that I have learned far more important lessons for life: a self-education to be responsible, grow up, find myself, and realize who

I am. Academia in the United States has offered me not only the best in scholarship but also an inspiration to be a genuine, honest, concerned world citizen.

In the linguistics program at Purdue, I have had the privilege of being exposed to state-of-the-art research facilities and libraries, interacting with eminent scholars in the field, practicing independence of thought and pursuing original ideas thanks to endless support and encouragement from the faculty and my peers. The experience of teaching undergraduates, of exploring the potentials of other young minds has been a rewarding one.

Graduate living over the years has been a myriad of experiences: sharing apartments to living alone, new friends, course-loaded semesters, midnight birthday celebrations, and more. There were many memorable firsts: the first day as an undergraduate instructor, first conference presentation, first credit card, first laptop (the bills came later!), a driver's license, first bus trip to Chicago, fireworks over Lake Michigan at Navy Pier, my first own car, Chinese buffet, and sushi, the first snow (and snowblading!), and my first visit to a Starbucks coffeehouse deserve special mention. In making a home away from home, the new ways turned into habits. The journey so far has been eventful, the experiences priceless.

To you who dream of boarding that plane, buckle up; the adventure just begins and never really ends, making it so beautiful and worthwhile. Good luck. Bon voyage. ■

See also *Campus Connections* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>], *College and University Education in the United States* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/1105.html>], and U.S. Department of State Student and Exchange Visitors [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1270.html].

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A Student Voice (Morocco)

Ali Biaz



The campus at the University of California, Berkeley

Ali Biaz is a Moroccan national residing in France who is currently studying for a master's degree in financial engineering at the University of California, Berkeley.

During my first two weeks at the University of California, Berkeley, I experienced some unexpected, funny, and sometimes embarrassing situations. Allow me to share some with you. But first, let me give advice to other prospective foreign students who plan to study in the United States.

The first advice is to apply for the visa at least two months before the beginning of the program to be sure to be on schedule. I learned this lesson at my expense. Indeed, I applied for my student visa a little bit late, and, unfortunately, I missed two weeks of classes.

My second advice is to check the weather before coming! I was pretty sure that California was sunny all year around so I left all my jackets and sweaters in Paris.

What a huge mistake! It rained almost every day during the first week in Berkeley.

I have to admit that I quickly forgot these unfortunate events. Life in Berkeley is very pleasant, and everything is so easy compared to Paris or Rabat. For instance, in only 24 hours I opened a bank account, subscribed for a cell phone, and signed the lease agreement for an apartment.

Besides that, almost all the shops are open on Sunday, which is very practical but quite unusual for me.

Concerning the Berkeley campus, it is just impressive! It is huge with so many different schools, libraries, computer labs at the cutting edge of technology, and great sport facilities.

The first thing that astonished me is that students may come late to class. They casually enter and leave the classroom many times during class. In France, students respect the teacher's lesson so they come on time and leave the classroom only at the end of the lecture.

Concerning Californians, they are in general very nice, open minded, and talkative, even if I am not totally used to their habits yet. Indeed, I was used to shaking my friends' hands every day in France, and even many times a day in Morocco. During my second day at Berkeley, I shook the hand of one of my classmates whom I had met the day before and he told me "I think we already met!"

Another funny story occurred during the first party I attended: A girl that I met before came to hug me. I thought she wanted to kiss me like we usually do in Morocco and France to say hello. So I kissed her and she seemed a little bit embarrassed.

I live currently a great experience, and I would just encourage any student to enroll in a program in the United States. ■

See also *Campus Connections* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>] and *College and University Education in the United States* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/1105.html>].

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The Problem With Top-Schools Lists

Burton Bollag

The immense diversity of U.S. colleges and universities makes rankings meaningless. Burton Bollag is a former correspondent for The Chronicle of Higher Learning.

There are around 4,000 accredited universities and other higher education institutions in the United States. They offer an immense range of educational experiences, from large research universities to small, friendly liberal arts colleges. This helps explain why the United States attracts more international students than any other country, says Allan E. Goodman, president of the Institute of International Education, a non-profit group promoting student exchanges to and from America.

“While elite U.S. programs are among the best in the world,” Goodman says, “the unique strength of the U.S. higher education system is [its] diversity.”

There is no official ranking system to indicate which institutions are better than others, though several unofficial rankings are compiled by magazines and associations. However, educators urge caution in using a ranking table and emphasize that the best choice for one student may be very different from the best choice for another.

Institutions of all types are spread across the United States. Some students want a campus that will give them the excitement and rich cultural life of a big city such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles. Others value the tranquility and beauty of a rural setting, whether the quiet forests and snowy winters of the Northeast, subtropical Florida, the dry expanses of the West, or the Pacific coast with its seashore and nearby mountains.

Some colleges have strong athletic programs in such sports as basketball, American football, and tennis. Others afford easy access to unspoiled nature, or are near oceans or lakes where students can swim or sail.

Many institutions have particular strengths in certain academic areas, making them a good choice for students interested in those fields.

In the United States, the terms college and university are often used interchangeably, although colleges tend to

be smaller and offer mostly undergraduate degrees, while universities also offer graduate degrees. Colleges are in no way considered inferior to universities.

Universities can be public or private. Private, non-profit universities include some of the best-known institutions, such as Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. Public universities are founded and subsidized by one of America’s 50 states, and by some cities. They are often very large — with 20,000 students or more — and are generally less expensive than private institutions, but out-of-state and foreign students pay more than local students.

At universities, professors may be involved in leading-edge research. But classes, especially for first- and second-year students, tend to be large and may be taught by graduate students instead of professors.

At liberal arts colleges, classes are smaller and professors tend to have more time to spend with students.

Institutes specialize in a narrow field of professional studies, such as technology, art and design, or health care. Many are private.

There are hundreds of colleges and universities affiliated with a particular religious tradition, though most of them enroll students from all religious backgrounds. The United States also has dozens of historically black colleges and universities, most of whose students are African Americans.

Community colleges offer two-year degrees in a wide variety of fields, and some provide intensive English-language instruction. They provide the least expensive post-secondary education. Students who successfully complete a community college program can often transfer to a four-year college to continue their undergraduate studies. ■

See also *Campus Connections* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>] and *College and University Education in the United States* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/1105.html>].

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A Student Voice (Iran)

Rodin Hamidi



Courtesy of Democracy Video Challenge

Rodin Hamidi receives his Democracy Video Challenger award from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Rodin Hamidi is one of six 2009 winners of the Democracy Video Challenge. An Iranian residing in Dubai, he has applied for admission to a number of arts schools in New York.

I found out what America's real name is after having spent only two days there during my first visit — the Land of Opportunity. Although I had always had an image of America in my mind, which was mostly influenced by blockbuster movies, I never thought I would one day have the chance to actually travel there.

In September 2009, I finally had the opportunity to visit the United States under the best of circumstances. I was one of six people from around the world who won the global Democracy Video Challenge that year, and all my travel expenses were being paid by the U.S. Department of State. The trip gave me the chance to visit several major cities and meet people from various cultural backgrounds, and, most exciting of all, to receive my award from Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

As a young artist, I had always dreamt of being in the city that is considered to be the heart of the art world, the truly amazing Big Apple, New York City. When I arrived in New York, I realized that it was exactly as I had always imagined it to be. Soon, I felt that this was a place where I would love to live and to make the best of every minute of my time there. I therefore started researching various universities and art schools in the city. I had always wanted to further my studies in art and cinema and to

obtain a masters degree in fine arts from a high-caliber institution, and there are almost as many such schools in New York as there are shopping malls in Dubai where I currently live. The next step was to prepare documents, portfolios, transcripts, etc. — many of them for each of the art schools I wanted to apply to.

For an international student, the process comprises not only applying to the schools and universities and then waiting impatiently for their replies, but also applying for visas. I'm an Iranian citizen, and when one of the universities I had applied to requested that I come for an in-person interview, I realized that it would be impossible for me to receive a visa to travel to the United States in time for the scheduled meeting and that I would probably lose that opportunity.

There are many emotional ups and downs, feelings of confusion, desperation, of not being able to plan ahead. Applicants invest a lot of time, energy, and hope in the application process, and university administrations and faculty members spend time and effort to determine whether you qualify as a potential candidate. In addition, there are other major questions that you must answer: If I am accepted, how can I finance it all? Is it really worth that much money?

The expenses are mind-blowing, especially for non-U.S. citizens who, in addition to living expenses and tuition, must also factor in travel costs. And facing these problems, it's you and your dreams.

Again you calm yourself down and you look in the mirror, smile, and continue to have faith that there is a way. Regardless of what you are going through, it is important to keep yourself on track and to be productive in whatever you do. This was the biggest lesson I learned during the time I was waiting for others to decide where my future would lead. ■

See also *Campus Connections* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/0809.html>] and *College and University Education in the United States* [<http://www.america.gov/publications/ejournalusa/1105.html>].

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A Student Voice (Bangladesh)

Mohammad Nasim



Courtesy of the University of Texas at Dallas

The School of Management building at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Mohammad Nasim of Bangladesh is studying for a master's degree in finance at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Traveling to the United States has always been one of my dreams, whether for higher studies, vacation, or work. However, it is not like moving from one city to another in your home country. Traveling to the United States requires one to follow several steps. The traveler must meticulously plan and prepare with adequate documents before making the final decision to travel to the United States.

The first step involves applying for the visa at a U.S. consulate in the traveler's home country. There are different visa classifications including student (F1), visitor (B1/B2) and work visa (H1B), and the traveler must apply for the correct visa depending on the purpose of the trip to the United States. This process is very rigorous and involves completing and submitting several forms in the U.S. consulate and facing the consular officer for an interview justifying the reason for traveling by providing valid documents.

Some of the documents that are required and usually requested by the consular officer include a valid passport, bank statement, admission letter (for students), and work authorization letter (for workers). Travelers must apply for the visa well ahead of time as certain visa applications require further administrative processing and security clearances. Obtaining these can be lengthy.

I was accepted at the University of Texas at Dallas for study beginning January 11, 2010. Once I received the admissions letter and I-20 form from my university, I arranged my other supporting documents and applied for a student visa in the last week of December 2009. I had only two weeks before my classes would start. After my visa interview, my application was sent for further administrative processing. I thought this process would take no more than two weeks. I did not realize that this process can be time consuming. It took two and a half months to complete, and only then was I issued a student visa. The embassy could not waive or expedite this process in any way.

Fortunately, I had permission from my professors to start late as I kept them informed about my situation.

The second step was to purchase an airline ticket. This can be difficult during peak travel seasons. Once the traveler arrives in America at the airport or other port of entry, he or she has to meet an immigration and customs officer. This officer has the final say in admitting the traveler to the United States. Secondary inspections are often performed, and it may take several hours before the traveler comes out of the airport.

In my case, I was very worried as I was entering the United States two months after my classes started. However, I carried the authorization letters from my professors and presented them to the officer at the border. At the end, I had no troubles going through immigration and customs because I carried all valid documents.

My personal recommendations to travelers who plan to go the United States in the near future include applying for the visa way ahead of time, carrying all necessary and valid documents, and being confident and honest during the consular interview and at the port of entry. If you do all these things, your travel experience to the United States should be a pleasant and smooth one. ■

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

I Want to Apply for a Business Visa

WHO MAY APPLY FOR A BUSINESS VISA?

You may apply for a business visa if you are traveling to attend a professional event or conference, to investigate or survey potential business sites, or to negotiate a contract. For other examples of business travel, please see <http://travel.state.gov/pdf/BusinessVisa.pdf>.

You must apply for a visa unless your country participates in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) and you plan a visit of fewer than 90 days. Travelers from VWP program nations must have a passport that can be scanned by an electronic reader. A new regulation requires that VWP travelers apply for electronic travel authorization. Find more information on this page: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1990.html#passport.

HOW LONG BEFORE MY TRIP SHOULD I APPLY?

Apply at least two months before you plan to travel, three months if the travel is for a scientific conference. This allows for the time it takes to obtain a visa interview and processing time for the visa; if your visa will be mailed to you, include delivery time in your travel plans. Wait times vary by embassy and time of the year — for example, many visa applicants want to travel during summer, so the wait times for an appointment may be longer then. Country-specific guidance is available at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>. http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

WHAT WILL IT COST TO OBTAIN A VISA?

You must pay a nonrefundable visa-processing fee of \$131 (as of May 2010). Depending on a reciprocal arrangement between your country and the United

States, you might also have to pay a visa-issuing fee. Check to see whether your country has a reciprocity fee at

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/fees/fees_1341.html.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN STEPS IN APPLYING FOR A B-1 VISA?

The first step is to make an appointment for a visa interview. Consult the Web site of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate in your country for the right procedure. You must then pay the visa-processing fee and fill out the visa application form(s) required in your country: the online form DS-160 is replacing the DS-156 in most countries. Forms are available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html. (Note: In most countries, you must fill out the application forms and pay the application fee before seeking an interview. Find visa information specific to your country here: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.)

For the interview, you must bring several documents: (1) a passport valid beyond your dates of travel; (2) the appointment confirmation sheet; (3) the confirmation page of the completed DS-160; (4) a receipt for the visa application fee; and (5) a 5X5 cm. photo, unless you already uploaded a photo with your DS-160 application.

You must also bring evidence showing why you are taking the trip, that you intend to leave the United States, and that you have sufficient funds to meet your needs during the trip. Check with the U.S. embassy in your country to see whether other documentation is necessary.

See also U.S. Department of State Business Visa Center [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_2664.html].



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.

A Business Voice (Kenya)

Frederick Masinde Oyange



Taxis line up to transport incoming passengers at Baltimore/Washington International Airport.

Fredrick Masinde Oyange is a marketing manager for Undugu Fair Trade Limited in Kenya.

My first trip outside Africa was to the United States in 1995 to attend a Fair Trade conference held in Maryland. This experience helped all my future travels as the conference issued guideline information well in advance to facilitate travel arrangements. I used this information as a checklist to confirm all travel requirements prior to departure.

I was quite excited about this trip. All my friends were happy for me and envious. The number one requirement that makes most travelers to the United States apprehensive is getting the entry visa. Since I had all the necessary documents to support my visa application, I was confident that my application would be approved, and it was joy when I was granted a five-year B1/B2 multiple-entry visa.

With the visa in my possession, I was now able to confirm my travel itinerary, air ticket, and travel insurance. This was my first long air flight, a total of 26 hours connecting through Amsterdam and Detroit with the final destination of Baltimore. My travel agent was very helpful in offering the necessary tips on how to go through airport connections, and which signs to look for

at every airport of transit and arrival. The security screenings at airports are more thorough than the one at the embassy, and one must have all the relevant travel documents within easy reach for this purpose.

I arrived in the United States and had my first cultural shock on getting out of the airport as I could not easily locate a taxi cab. It took me some time to realize that the elegant limousines were actually taxi cabs, unlike the small old cars used at home. The drive to the Maryland conference site was quite a sight to behold,

particularly the countryside farmlands with modern homes standing on well-kept garden lawns with U.S. flags hoisted. On arrival at the hotel, feeling jet lagged, I went straight to sleep. When I awoke at eight o'clock in the evening, the sun was still up prompting me to prepare myself for breakfast only to be informed that dinner was being served!

Since this was a planned conference, it gave me the experience to be able to plan for my subsequent trips to the United States. Now I always make sure I have all relevant travel information, including business appointments, prior to departure. ■

See also U.S. Department of State Business Visa Center [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_2664.html].

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I Want to Apply for a Temporary Work Visa

WHO MAY APPLY FOR AN H-1B VISA?

You may apply for an H-1B visa if you are a professional or student being sponsored by a U.S. employer to work as a specialist in the United States. To qualify for an H-1B visa, you must hold at least a bachelor's degree and the U.S. position must require at least a bachelor's degree. Only up to 65,000 H-1B visas are issued each year. Learn about the types of temporary workers at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO APPLY FOR AN H-1B VISA?

Because the H-1B visa requires approval from several U.S. agencies, you and your employer should begin the application process at least 120 days before you plan to start work.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS IN APPLYING FOR THE H-1B VISA?

First, your sponsoring employer must file a petition (the I-129) and pay the associated fees. Once this is completed, you must make an appointment for an interview and apply for an H-1B visa by consulting the Web site of the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate

in your country. Information about waiting times for scheduling an interview and processing your application is available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

You will need to fill out a visa application form (see "required documentation" on this page: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html) and pay the visa-processing fee of \$131 (as of May 2010) and, in some countries, a reciprocal visa fee (check on reciprocity fees at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/fees/fees_1341.html). For more information on fees, see http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html.

You must bring the following documents to your interview: (1) a valid passport; (2) the receipt number printed on the approved Form I-129 petition; (3) the confirmation page of the form DS-160 online visa application; and (4) one 5X5 cm. photo if you did not upload it with your form DS-160. You must also bring a receipt for the visa-processing fee and, in some countries, you may also need to pay a visa issuance fee. Find visa information specific to your country here: <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

See also U.S. Department of State Temporary Workers Overview [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1275.html].



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.

A Professional Voice (Nigeria)

Elizabeth Anche



Nigerian and Tanzanian students at an IRIS program.

Courtesy of Martha Pope/IRIS

Elizabeth Anche is a journalist with Kaduna State Media Corporation in Nigeria.

My six-week stay in the United States, aka “God’s Own Country,” motivated me into knowing I could actually make a great change in the lives of the people in my own country, Nigeria.

As participants in the Women in Leadership program coordinated by the nonprofit organization Iowa Resource for International Service (IRIS), our team from Northern Nigeria felt highly honored by the recognition given to us by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa at the Capitol in Des Moines.

I was really impressed by the level of community participation, charity, and volunteer work to which most organizations and American families provide support. This could be due to a tradition of an American respect for human dignity, which I immediately imbibed. I experienced that respect first hand, hosted by American families in their homes to foster cross-cultural relationships between them and foreigners.

I got along very well with my host family and admired Little Bit, a puppy that became like a little brother to me. One striking thing about Little Bit is that it is a diaper-wearing puppy whereas diapers are considered as luxury for babies in my country! I discovered Americans truly love pets. In Nigeria dogs watch over our homes; Americans keep them as companions.

Back home I bury myself in work 24/7 with no time for leisure, but I cherish the moments I had visiting Washington landmarks such as the White House and museums that captured the past with accuracy such as the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, an African American cultural museum, and the Washington Memorial.

As a journalist, I was excited to be interviewed on the Voice of America (VOA) while I did my internship at Iowa Public Television (IPTV). I was involved in producing a television program, *Love For Quilting*. As a show of friendship and appreciation for my involvement in the production of some of the program series, the orphanage at my Nigerian church got some quilting fabrics as gifts. At IPTV, I was lucky to witness the transition of the station from analog to digital broadcast system, a feat Nigeria intends to achieve by 2012.

I got some ideas on how to help Nigerians from visits to organizations such as ACCESS, a shelter for battered women; Sisters on Target, an African-American women mentoring group; and Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics.

Back in Nigeria we translated the U.S. experience by organizing an international conference on the role of women in Nigeria’s future and by empowering indigent women in rural communities. This is what I call leadership transfer — American solutions exported to Nigeria with an African flavor. ■

See also U.S. Department of State Foreign Media, Press and Radio Visas [http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1276.html].

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Getting Around

Jane Levere



© AP Images

Amtrak's high-speed Acela trains operate from Boston to Washington.

The choices for traveling from place to place in the United States likely differ from those with which many foreign visitors may be familiar. Jane Levere writes on transportation and travel issues.

Getting around the vast United States differs from how one travels within some other countries. While certain parts of the United States are densely populated, other parts are not. This means that public transportation options are more plentiful in certain cities, especially those with a large central core, while geography and economics dictate greater reliance on automobiles in other regions. Going from one place to another thus might mean taking an airplane, or a train, or a bus, or driving an auto — or some combination of these.

Many people travel from one region of the country to another, or even within the same region, on domestic flights.

Although Japan, China, and many countries in Europe have highly developed high-speed rail services, such as Japan's bullet train and the Eurostar, high-speed rail service is not prevalent in the United States. Only along the Northeast Corridor does Amtrak, which runs

the nationwide rail network, operate high-speed Acela trains that connect Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington with frequent, fast service. Amtrak also operates special sightseeing trains throughout the western United States, such as the California Zephyr and Coast Starlight.

Companies such as Greyhound and Trailways provide frequent, long-distance bus service across the United States; regional operators such as Megabus and BoltBus offer discounted fares on certain popular routes.

Public transportation options vary widely in U.S. cities. Extensive, frequent bus service and subway systems are more prevalent in large cities such as New York; tour-bus companies also offer sightseeing tours in major U.S. cities.

Renting a car is still one of the best ways to travel around the United States, says Wendell Cox, principal of Demographia, a public policy consulting company in Belleville, Illinois.

"It works marvelously well and is available anywhere," Cox says.

Dan Kasper, managing director of LEC, an economic and financial consulting firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, adds that gasoline is much cheaper in the United States than in many other countries. This makes renting a car more affordable, he says.

"Given the expanse of the country and the fact that many places are not densely enough populated to support public transportation, a rental car will let you get off the beaten path," Kasper says. "It will give you flexibility to set your own pace and go where you want to go."

To rent an auto, U.S. rental companies generally require foreign travelers to present a valid driver's license and major credit card. ■

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How Long Will It Take to Get My Visa?

You should apply for a non-immigrant visa as early as possible — between 60 and 120 days before you plan to travel. This time includes the wait time for (1) receiving an interview appointment, (2) visa processing, and (3) additional administrative processing (rarely needed.) Also, if your passport and visa will be returned to you by mail, factor in that time as well as when you make your travel plans. For the current wait times for interviews in your country, please see http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.

In addition, it is important to review thoroughly all information on the Web site of the U.S. embassy's consular section in your country for local procedures and instructions, such as how to make an interview appointment. Consular section Web sites will also explain any additional procedures for students,

exchange visitors, and those who need an earlier visa interview appointment.

Most applicants will receive their visas within days of having their interview. For a smaller number of cases, additional "administrative processing" may be required to determine whether the applicant is entitled to the visa. Because U.S. officials cannot always know ahead of time whether additional processing is required, it is very important for you to apply as early as possible in advance of your planned trip.

Please note that in several countries, visa services are limited or unavailable because of civil unrest, war, or other reasons; more information is available here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1302.html.



Access this information on your mobile device at <http://m.america.gov/17365/show/8d43be0c84ff61ca84bf3bea6778225c&t=6ba0099020d1861fbc45515fcc4079a>.

Some Estimated Travel Times

Estimated in-air flight time New York-Boston: 1 hour, 5 minutes

Estimated driving time New York-Boston: 3 hours, 56 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time New York-Washington: 1 hour

Estimated driving time New York-Washington: 4 hours, 3 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time New York-Chicago: 3 hours

Estimated driving time New York-Chicago: 12 hours, 45 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time New York-Miami: 3 hours

Estimated driving time New York-Miami: 20 hours, 31 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time New York-Los Angeles: 6 hours, 10 minutes

Estimated driving time New York-Los Angeles: 41 hours, 40 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time Miami-Los Angeles: 6 hours

Estimated driving time Miami-Los Angeles: 40 hours, 59 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time Miami-Chicago: 3 hours, 5 minutes

Estimated driving time Miami-Chicago: 22 hours, 14 minutes

Estimated in-air flight time Los Angeles-San Francisco: 1 hour, 10 minutes

Estimated driving time Los Angeles-San Francisco: 6 hours

Estimated in-air flight time Los Angeles-Honolulu: 6 hours

Sources: www.oag.com, www.randmcnally.com

Getting Through Airport Security

Jane Levere



© AP Images/Jon Super

The passenger goes through a body scanner such as this one at an airport in the United Kingdom.

Jane Levere, who writes on transportation and travel issues, describes her experience with airport security. For more information on getting through airport security, visit www.tsa.gov.

To take a flight within the United States, I must go through airport security, which is administered by the Transportation Security Administration, part of the Department of Homeland Security.

As I approach the security checkpoint, I am stopped by a transportation security officer, who asks me to show her my boarding pass and legal identification. I use my driver's license as identification, though international travelers should use a passport.

Once the officer has reviewed these documents, I proceed to another officer, who checks my documents again. Along with all other passengers, I then proceed

to the checkpoint, where both my carry-on baggage and I are screened. I take several plastic bins, in which I place my handbag and tote bag. As required, I also remove my shoes and coat and place them in the bins. My belongings go onto a conveyor belt, where they pass through an X-ray machine. Transportation security officers monitor the X-ray machine screen to insure my belongings do not contain any prohibited items or items that may pose a threat to aviation security.

Another transportation security officer directs me to enter an advanced imaging technology machine, also known as a body scanner. This is a new screening device used by TSA at several airports nationwide. Once inside the scanner, the officer asks me to raise my arms momentarily as the equipment creates an image of my body. This officer cannot see the image, which

is displayed on a screen in a remote viewing location; the image is reviewed by another officer who cannot see me. Once my image, which is blurred for privacy reasons, is reviewed for any potential anomalies, it is automatically deleted from the system, and I exit the scanner.

In a matter of seconds, I am cleared to retrieve my belongings from the conveyor belt, put my shoes and coat back on, and proceed to the gate to wait for my flight. ■

See also <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/index.shtm>.

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Additional Resources

Publications, Web sites, and films on traveling in the United States

Books and Articles

"The Best Sandwiches in America." *Esquire*, February 16, 2008, www.esquire.com/features/food-drink/sandwiches

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Notes: "Based on a film by Ken Burns produced by Dayton Duncan and Ken Burns, written by Dayton Duncan."

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Stern, Jane and Michael Stern. *Roadfood.* New York: Broadway, 2008.

Sullivan, Robert. *Cross Country: Fifteen Years and 90,000 Miles on the Roads and Interstates of America with Lewis and Clark, a Lot of Bad Motels, a Moving Van, Emily Post, Jack Kerouac, My Wife, My Mother-in-law, Two Kids, and Enough Coffee to Kill an Elephant.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2006.

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Walsh, Robb. *Sex, Death, and Oysters: A Half-shell Lover's World Tour.* Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009.

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Institute of International Education

Open Doors: Report on International Educational Exchange. New York: The Institute; with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Open Doors Report 2009

Selected tables are available online:

<http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/>

U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration Office of Travel and Tourism Industries

International Visitation to the United States: A Statistical Summary of U.S. Arrivals (2009)

http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/outreachpages/download_data_table/2009_Visitation_Report.pdf

Web Sites Government

**U.S. Department of Commerce
International Trade Administration
Office of Travel and Tourism Industries**
<http://tinet.ita.doc.gov/>

**U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement**
Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)
<http://www.ice.gov/sevis>

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs**
http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs**
<http://www.exchanges.state.gov/>

U.S. Department of State
EducationUSA
<http://educationusa.state.gov/>

U.S. National Park Service
<http://www.nps.gov>

Non-Governmental

AMIDEAST, America-Mideast Educational and Training Services

AMIDEAST is a private, nonprofit organization that strengthens mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa.

<http://www.amideast.org/>

American Park Network

Comprehensive source of information on national parks and public lands, including visitor guides for national parks.

<http://americanparknetwork.com/info/about-us>

Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)

CIEE is the leading U.S. non-governmental international education organization. CIEE creates and administers programs that allow high school and university students and educators to study and teach abroad.

<http://www.ciee.org>

Council for International Exchange of Scholars

The Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), the scholar division of the Institute of International Education (IIE), is well known for its expertise and extensive experience in conducting international exchange programs for scholars and university administrators.

<http://www.cies.org>

U.S. Travel Association

This association assists members with programs and platforms to help promote travel to and within the United States, especially through International Pow Wow, the pre-eminent international trade show bringing travel to America; DiscoverAmerica.com, the official U.S. travel and tourism web site; and Discover America pavilions, exhibition showcases at travel trade shows around the world.

<http://www.ustravel.org/>

Filmography

America by Rail (2005)

Producer: Topics Entertainment

Length: Four videos (201 minutes)

Color

Summary: Tour the United States from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco by train in this railroad adventure which explores America's scenic beauty and legendary trains.

Videos include matching maps of the areas.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0166967/>

The National Parks: America's Best Idea (2009)

Producer: Ken Burns/Florentine Films

Length: Six videos (700 minutes)

Color

Summary: TV mini-series [six episodes]

The history of the U.S. National Parks system, including the initial ideas which led to the world's first national parks and the expansion of the system over 150 years.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1464482/>

North America's National Parks (2008)

Producer: Topics Entertainment

Length: Four videos (265 minutes)

Color

Summary: Explores some of North America's most celebrated landscapes in North American national parks, including Yellowstone, Yosemite, Alaska's Denali, and the grand canyons.

Over New England (2008)

Producer: Topics Entertainment

Length: Four videos (263 minutes)

Color

Notes: Emmy-Award winner

Summary: Celebrates New England's landscapes and landmarks, from red barns, white steeples and village greens to rugged coastlines, safe harbors and lighthouses, all part of its distinctly regional character.

The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed above. All Internet links were active as of May 2010.

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IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

<http://america.gov/publications/ejournalusa.html>

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Information Programs